(b) whether it is a fact that most of research works in India are not funded properly by Government; and

(c) what steps Government are taking to give thrust to research and development?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY (SHRI KAPIL SIBAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) It is incorrect to say that research works in India are not funded properly by the Government. Government has always accorded a high priority to scientific and technological research funding. There are several Government departments, agencies and organizations which provide funding for Research and Development in Science and Technology. The primary role of Department of Science and Technology, for example, is to provide funds for extramural Research and Development in academic institutions. Many other departments, such as the Department of Biotechnology, Department of Scientific and Industrial Research, Department of Ocean Development, Department of Agricultural Research and Extension/Indian Council of Agricultural Research, India Council of Medical Research also fund research and development activities within the allocated resources, which are subject to overall budgetary constraints, each Department has a well developed system of providing funding support to research projects, based on expert/peer review of the project proposal and its funding requirements in terms of manpower, equipment and other facilities.

The overall investment in Research and Development (of which the major share is of the Government) is estimated to go up from 0.81% of the GDP in 1998-99 to 1.2% in 2003-04 as a result of the priority accorded to Research and Development by the Government. It is hoped that in terms of the policy commitments of the Government, the investment in Research and development will increase to 2% of the GDP by the end of 10th Five Year Plan.

Cargo handled by Visakhapatnam part

480. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) what was the total tonnage of Cargo handled by Visakhapatnam port in 2003-04;

(b) what is the target set for Visakhapatnam port in 2004-05;

(c) whether it is a fact that turn around time is too much at Visakhapatnam port;

(d) if so, what are the causes of delay in loading and unloading of ships in Visakhapatnam; and

(e) the steps proposed to be taken to improve the functioning of this port?

THE MINISTER OF SHIPPING (SHRI T.R. BAALU): (a) 47.74 million tonnes of cargo was handled by Visakhapatnam Port in 2003-04.

(b) A target of 49.56 million tonnes of cargo has been fixed for Visakhapatnam Port in 2004-05.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Does not arise.

(e) Improvement in performance of ports is an ongoing process. Various steps taken to further improve the functioning of Visakhapatnam Port include de-bottlenecking of Ore Handling Plant, induction of higher capacity cranes, advance planning of ship movements, close monitoring of performance of vessels, development of adequate open space, insistence on the users to deploy adequate equipment, close co-ordination with Railways to ensure faster clearance of cargo and development of additional warehouse facilities for foodgrains.

Implementation of Merchant Marine Act

481. SHRI S.M. LALJAN BASHA: Will the Minister of SHIPPING be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government have invited any suggestions from the fishing industry on the need to evolve a practical system of implementing the Merchant Marine Act;

(b) if so, what steps would Government initiate to ensure frequent interaction and discussions with diverse fishery association;

(c) whether any interim steps have been taken by Government to assist fishing sector; and

(d) the details of steps proposed to create an excellent atmosphere to modernize the laws and regulations concerning shipping and fishing sector in India?